

# Soldiers

Online



MSG Thomas Radomski of 3rd Bn., 1st SFG, prepares to release jumpers during a joint U.S.-Thai friendship jump.



SSG Tony Crammer of 1st Bn., 19th SFG, takes a Thai woman's vital signs during a medical capabilities exercise conducted during Exercise Cobra Gold.



Psychological operations soldiers use a vehicle-mounted loudspeaker to address a crowd of "protestors" during training.

**S**PECIAL-operations soldiers promote peace, deter aggression, educate foreign soldiers in military skills and values, provide humanitarian assistance and, when necessary, conduct combat missions.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command, based at Fort Bragg, N.C., is the Army component of the U.S. Special Operations Command, headquarters for all Department of Defense special operations elements.

### Varied Operations

USASOC soldiers jump, fly, march and talk their way into more theaters worldwide than any other Army command.

Special forces soldiers undertake high-visibility missions such as the Kosovo peacekeeping force, but they also work in little-known operations, promoting peace and stability in volatile regions of Africa, Central and South America, and Asia.

SSG Amanda C. Glenn works for the USASOC Public Affairs Office at Fort Bragg, N.C.

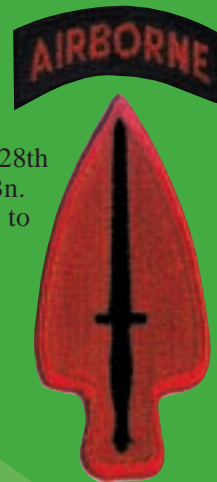
When the United States mounted Operation Just Cause, Army special forces units conducted special reconnaissance missions in Panama to alert rangers and troops of the 82nd Airborne Division of Panamanian Defense Forces activities. During operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the 5th Special Forces Group provided command and control for several Middle Eastern military and coalition forces, and the 10th SFG stepped in to protect Kurdish refugees in Northern Iraq following the war.

In many of their operations, special-forces units rely on the "plus or minus 30-second" guarantee of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. The "Night Stalkers" were there for Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada and Operation Prime Chance in the Persian Gulf. They spent Christmas in Panama supporting Operation Just Cause, and they further proved their mettle during operations Desert Storm, Uphold and Restore Democracy and Joint Endeavor.

Wherever there are Army special forces, you'll find members of the Special Operations Support Command, SOSCOM. The 112th Special Operations Signal Battalion and 528th Spec. Opns. Support Bn. deploy with SOF units to provide initial deploy-



Soldiers from the 7th SFG conduct demolition training during the Special Forces Advanced Urban Combat course.



# The Army's Special Operators

Story by SSG Amanda C. Glenn





SSG Amanda Glenn

Special operations soldiers in an inflatable boat move toward an "enemy beach" during a training exercise. Waterborne operations are another facet of special operations warfare.

ment packages including communications, transportation, food service, water purification and a host of other services and capabilities.

Rangers provide the infantry firepower of USASOC. Well-known for their exploits in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, rangers also played a vital role during operations in Saudi Arabia, Grenada, Panama and Somalia.

## Lethality

When the 160th SOAR goes to battle, it is loaded for bear, flying specially modified helicopters. The AH-6 Little Bird can be outfitted with 2.75-in. rockets, a 7.62 minigun, Hellfire missiles, a 30 mm cannon and a .50-caliber machine gun. Many SOAR helicopters are also modified for in-flight refueling and have expanded fuel tanks. These extended capabilities were key elements in the assault and seizure of Panama's

Torrijos and Tocumen airports and the Rio Hato Airbase.

"The deadliest of all available assets, capable of unleashing the most firepower and thus causing death and destruction to the enemy, is the individual special forces soldier," said LTC Edward Reeder, deputy commander of 7th SFG. "Our soldiers are better equipped than those of any other military force in the world, but regardless of our technological advantages, the man peering through the iron sights is the key element in winning any battle."

SF soldiers prove this true in the many missions they perform. During Operation Urgent Fury, SF teams conducted devastating direct-action missions against radio stations, bridges and Panamanian Defense Force garrisons. During Desert Shield and Desert Storm, special reconnaissance missions deep within Iraq reported enemy activities. Each time Iraq threatened Kuwait, 5th SFG soldiers

factor, said 75th Ranger Regt. CSM Walter E. Rakow. What allows the ranger regiment to operate in any environment is the combination of great leadership, exacting discipline and intense training, he said. Rangers train in arctic, desert, jungle, mountain and amphibious environments, continually preparing themselves for any type of combat.

Because rangers operate primarily in urban areas and at night, they use state-of-the-art technology for night vision and target acquisition.

"Ranger leaders know how to instill discipline in themselves and in their soldiers. They train to high standards, which produces a deadly effective force," Rakow said.

## The SOF Pipeline

When service members graduate from the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, they become part

# A Special History

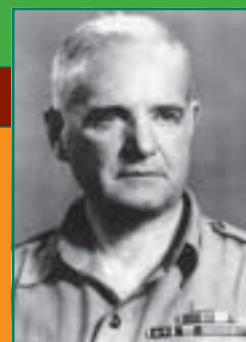
SSG Amanda C. Glenn

As early as 1670, a special class of men "ranged" the American frontier, protecting settlers. But their tactics of secret march, ambush and wilderness survival were not formally established until the French and Indian War, when Robert Rogers prepared a list of rules and concepts stressing readiness, security and tactics. During World War II, Darby's Rangers and Merrill's Marauders continued the tradition of shocking the enemy with lightning-fast attacks and

became the basis of today's ranger force.

When WWII broke out in Europe, William Donovan proposed the creation of a military organization that could parachute behind enemy lines, develop a network of contacts and train local guerilla forces. President Franklin D. Roosevelt saw the potential in Donovan's plan and, in 1941, formed the Coordinator of Intelligence. It became the Office of Strategic Services in 1942.

The OSS — which specialized in behind-the-lines guerilla warfare — was disbanded after World War II. In 1952 COL Aaron Bank and COL Russell Volckmann, both former OSS members, convinced Army officials of the need for unconventional warriors. Bank established the new organization's headquarters at



COL William Donovan

of an elite alumni.

The “special operations university,” SWCS, focuses on training, leader development, doctrine and personnel proponency. Courses range from SF assessment and selection to basic qualification and language training, and to such advanced courses as survival, close-quarter combat, sniper, military free fall and underwater operations. SWCS also teaches psychological operations and civil affairs courses, from the advanced individual training level through a master’s degree program.

The Special Operations Medical Training Battalion graduates all special operations medics, regardless of service branch. The training takes them from field environments to inner-city hospitals, and prepares them to handle all types of injuries and illnesses — from the common cold, to land-mine wounds, to delivering babies.

## Winning Hearts and Minds

Soldiers from U.S. Army Civil

Affairs and Psychological Operations Command are the link between field commanders and civil authorities in an area of operations. As in Kosovo, these soldiers quickly and systematically identify the critical needs of local populations facing the hardships of war or natural disaster.

The 96th Civil Affairs Bn. is the Army’s active-duty CA battalion, but it makes up only 4 percent of the CA force. Organized regionally by company, the 96th CA Bn.

deploys primarily to provide tactical support. Its soldiers prevent civilian interference with operations, assist tactical commanders in discharging responsibilities toward the civilian population and provide a liaison with civilian governmental agencies. This often means that CA coordinates with governmental and nongovernmental organizations to distribute food, help house and clothe displaced persons, provide medical care and protect the legal rights of indigenous populations.



Members of Co. A, 75th Ranger Regt., fast rope from a 3rd Bn., 160th SOAR, MH-47D Chinook to begin an airfield-seizure exercise at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. Walter Sokalski Jr.

Four reserve CA commands support their aligned regional commanders. Reserve units make up the other 96 percent of the Army’s CA structure and include soldiers with training and expertise learned only through civilian experience — such as finance, law, government and medicine. Reserve units rotate into missions as active forces redeploy, maintaining the Army’s fast-response capability in civil affairs.

USASOC’s technology, training, weaponry, aptitude, attitude and commitment combine to continually redefine these global scouts on point for the nation. □



Walter Sokalski Jr.

Members of the 75th Ranger Regt. descend from an Air Force C-141 during an airfield-seizure exercise.

Fort Bragg, recruiting former OSS officers, airborne and ranger troops, and seasoned war veterans. Most spoke two languages and were familiar with the customs of their target countries. Designated the 10th Special Forces Group, the unit had 10 soldiers when it activated on June 19.

By 1961, there were three special forces groups: the 10th, 7th (redesignated from the 77th) and 1st. These

units adopted the green beret as their official headgear that same year.

Special forces continued to grow, even as the rangers struggled to avoid extinction. Inactivated in 1945 and then activated in 1950, rangers continued to distinguish themselves in

**This World War II OSS radio operator in Burma played a key role in guerilla operations, just as modern SOF troops do.**





# Practicing PSYOP

MAJ Jonathan Withington

**T**HE message was clear. “We know where you’re located. We know where your equipment is located. Abandon your equipment or die.”

The prerecorded announcement, developed by a combined joint psychological operations task force, was broadcast by Commando Solo, an Air Force EC-130 aircraft, as part of a command post exercise during Exercise Cobra Gold 2000 in Thailand.

Active and Reserve PSYOP soldiers from U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., deployed to Thailand for the two-week exercise. The PSYOP soldiers supported a joint task force headed by the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force from Okinawa.

MAJ Jonathan Withington is the U.S. Special Forces Command public affairs officer at Fort Bragg, N.C.

MAJ Jonathan Withington



**PSYOPs soldiers in Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold use a sophisticated receiver to stay in touch with Fort Bragg.**

According to an exercise scenario, after “Silverland” forces invaded “Greenland” and “Country X,” the United Nations authorized deployment of a peace-enforcement force. The U.N. tasked a combined JTF to end

hostilities by establishing a zone of separation between the belligerents and conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

objective and developed a product and dissemination plan. Five active and Reserve tactical PSYOP teams and their Thai counterparts provided on-the-ground tactical support. Each TPT disseminated

hostilities by establishing a zone of separation between the belligerents and conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Pacific Command PSYOP Battalion, 4th PSYOP Group, spearheaded the establishment of the PSYOP task force, which focused its training on combined staff interoperability and integration, said LTC Craig E. Cowell, PACOM PSYOP Bn. commander.

Liaison officers worked to develop specific themes, and when a product such as a leaflet or broadcast was needed, a PSYOP targeting board analyzed each

## A Special History (continued)

combat but were again inactivated in 1951. The ranger flag didn’t fly again until the late 1960s, when the unit was activated and eventually became the 75th Infantry Regt.

The aviation arm of special operations was born in 1980, when assets were drawn from the 101st Abn. Div. and the 158th, 159th and 229th Aviation Bns. to form a task force that specialized in low-level, night operations. Designated the 160th Avn. Bn. on Oct. 16, 1981, the unit pioneered the tactics commonly used by today’s aviation units and developed procedures that enabled it to place special-operations soldiers into demanding objectives. The “Night Stalkers” were designated as the 160th Special Operations Avn. Regt. in May 1990.

Although the U.S. Army Spec. Ops. Support Command — which includes the 112th Spec. Ops. Signal Bn., the 528th Spec. Ops. Sprt. Bn. and the Material Management Center — has taken care of the support needs of the special operations community since 1986, its lineages are far older.

The 112th Sig. Bn. evolved from the 512th Abn. Sig. Company, which supported special operations in World War II. The 528th SOSB’s history dates to the 528th Quartermaster Service Bn., which served in Sicily, Italy, Southern France and Germany.

The U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Cmd., activated Nov. 27, 1990, is an integrated reserve and active-duty force comprising more than 10,000 soldiers

stationed in 26 states. The unit includes the active duty 4th PSYOPS Grp. and the Army Reserve’s 2nd and 7th PSYOPS Grps.

The active-duty 96th Civil Affairs Bn., formed in December 1974, and the Reserve 350th, 351st and 35th CA Cmds. work together to ensure the prevention of civilian interference with military operations, assist tactical commanders in discharging their responsibilities toward civilian populations and provide a liaison with civilian governmental agencies.

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School began as the Psychological Warfare Division of the Army General School at Fort Riley, Kan., in 1951. The school moved to Fort Bragg in 1952. Civil-affairs classes were added to the

coordinated messages to affect the battlefield scenario or support civil-military operations.

Medical support to rural areas promoted goodwill while providing humanitarian relief. While doctors and medics set up screening and treatment facilities, the TPTs roamed through villages to announce that the medical services were available.

Once military and civilian interference subsided, U.S. and Thai ground forces created a zone of

separation. TPTs used loudspeakers to deliver surrender appeals and civilian noninterference messages. They also distributed posters to warn belligerents of the consequences of firing at JTF helicopters.

While operations to separate the forces continued, the task force plans cell developed a noncombatant evacuation plan. A PSYOP detachment aboard the USS *Juneau* worked with marines to develop themes and messages that would support the evacuation. When the detachment came ashore with the marines, TPTs delivered noninterference messages and distributed evacuation instructions to evacuees at the consulates.

The message read: "U.S. forces are here to evacuate U.S. citizens. We will be here for a short duration only. We are here only temporarily and we will not keep forces in the area."

Because the primary objective of a peacekeeping force is the cessation of hostilities, PSYOP becomes an effective force multiplier. It provides the capability to encourage compliance by local groups through the use of nonlethal means of persuasion rather than compelling by force, thereby both hastening peace and saving lives in the end. □



**MAJ Robert W. Levalley of the 443rd CA Bn. helps a child select a gift following a town meeting in Kosovo.**



**SPC Todd P. Heasley (far left) and SGT David M. Cade (right) of the 9th PSYOP Bn. train with Thai counterparts.**

curriculum when the Civil Affairs School moved from Fort Gordon, Ga., to Fort Bragg in 1971. In 1961, the school established the Special Forces

Training Group to train enlisted volunteers for assignments in special forces groups.

In addition to its training role, the

school also tests new equipment. The school's Joint Special Operations Medical Training Center, established in 1996, consolidates and standardizes all SOF medical training within DOD.

In all, the school trains more than 10,000 U.S. and foreign students, yearly, in 68 programs.

USASOC, along with its subordinate commands, continue to lead the way on a global scale. From teaching to defending to giving aid, the soldiers of USASOC are without equal. □



**Special forces soldiers and local militia members cross a stream in Vietnam in 1967. The conflict in Southeast Asia saw the widespread use of American special operations forces.**



# Back to Basics

MAJ Jonathan Withington

**"S**ILVERLAND" counter-insurgent forces continually threatened from across the border, infiltrating at night to terrorize and rob "Country X" farmers. Fearful of losing more property and their way of life, the farmers turned to untrained and poorly equipped paramilitaries for security and defense. But help was on the way.

As part of Exercise Cobra Gold 2000, Operational Detachment Alpha-191 and its counterparts from the Royal Thai Army arrived to train the paramilitaries.

"Each year, we come over on a mission peripheral to the joint and combined task force scenario. This year, the scenario involved a 'border dispute' with a neighboring country and a related 'insurgency' in Thailand," explained LTC Richard Thomas, commander of 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, ODA-191's parent unit.

"We've been asked to come in and conduct a combined foreign internal defense mission with our Thai special forces counterparts, in order to eliminate the Silverland threat in the south," he said.

Teams train and conduct FIDs regularly in countries to which they are regionally oriented. One of six core SF missions, FID is an integral part of a regional combatant commander's engagement strategy.

Unlike most FID target audiences, the paramilitaries of Country X had no military background.

"This makes us really concentrate on the basics," said CPT

Mark T. Marik, ODA-191 commander.

ODA-191, the Royal Thai Army ODA and the paramilitaries moved in torrential monsoon rains to an area selected as their primary base camp. After establishing local security, the combined ODAs determined their



SSG Clyde Cruz, ODA-191's weapons sergeant, familiarizes Thai paramilitary troops with the M240B machine gun during base-camp operations.

MAJ Jonathan Withington

# Happy Anniversary, Rangers

SSG Amanda C. Glenn

**T**HE 75th Ranger Regiment and the ranger family dating back to the Korean War celebrate their 50th anniversary this month. Throughout their long history, beginning on the Colonial frontier, rangers have thrived on hard work, exacting environments and dangerous battlefields. Nowhere was this proven more clearly than in Korea, a turning point in ranger history.

Before the war, they had been inactivated and activated in response to each crisis. When they were activated in 1950, it was for good.

As the situation in Korea deteriorated, Army leaders ordered COL John Gibson Van Houten to find enough volunteers to man four ranger infantry companies. He was given 15 days to find the men and six weeks to train them. More than 5,000 experienced

paratroopers answered the call.

Those rangers immediately set a high training standard, practicing amphibious and airborne operations, low-level night jumps, demolitions, sabotage, close combat, weapon skills and land navigation. They added skills in communications, artillery, naval and aerial fires — and the physical training was constant and brutal.

Van Houten wanted a unit that could march 50 miles in 12 to 18 hours, swim in icy waters and sleep on the march. And while anyone who wanted to quit could do so without fear of harassment, the companies were still 30 percent over-

strength when the selection process ended.

When orders came, the rangers waded, jumped and marched into battle. The 1st Ranger Infantry Company immediately made its presence







MAJ Jonathan Withington

**NCOs from ODA-191 patrol with Thai paramilitary troops during small-unit training.**

work priorities and completed essential tasks for establishing the austere base camp before moving to the training phase.

The combined U.S.-Thai teams trained on targeted critical individual and squad-level skills, including weapons familiarization, medical-evacuation procedures, radio and telephone operating procedures, and small-unit tactics.

Only partially equipped with old shotguns, the paramilitaries moved as a squad through each training event.

At the end of the day, ODA-191 pressed ahead with a final event, a platoon-level tactical movement. Instructions were issued and the paramilitaries, aged 16 to 60, moved out with their combined ODA trainers.

The jungle route, which alternated from thick to sparse, forced the platoon to transition to appropriate formations. But the greatest challenge lay ahead.

Their objective was crossing a linear danger area — a swollen creek.

With SF NCOs watching closely, the paramilitaries went through the battle drill step-by-step, emerging unscathed on the other side.

The paramilitary soldiers eagerly learned all they could from their U.S. and Thai SF trainers. The 10-day training event culminated with a platoon ambush and a platoon raid on a checkpoint.

“This is a great opportunity to exercise our cross-cultural training and language capabilities,” Marik said. □

known by raiding behind enemy lines and destroying the 12th North Korean Division’s headquarters. Its actions were so daring, two other North Korean Regiments hastily withdrew from the area.

The 2nd and 4th RICs jumped into Korea and were the first units to cross and patrol north of the 38th Parallel. A 22-man platoon from the 8th RIC killed 70 enemy soldiers in a between-the-lines

battle with two Chinese reconnaissance companies. The rangers suffered only two fatalities.

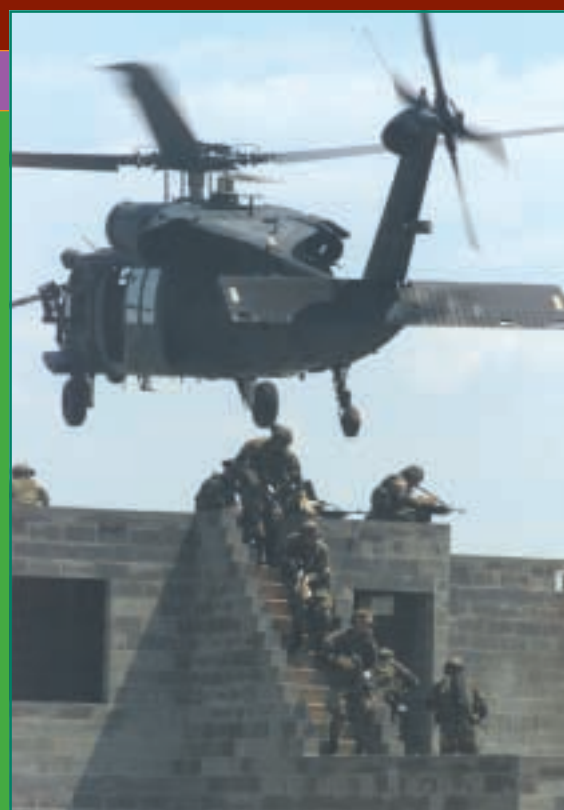
Today’s rangers still deploy by air, land and sea. They train exhaustively in arctic, jungle, desert, mountain and amphibious environments. They are tested constantly, and consistently rise to the top. After 50 years, the all-volunteer ranger force still rages into battle first to lead the way. □



SSG Amanda Glenn

**(Left) A ranger uses a dirt bike to patrol the perimeter of a unit area.**

**(Right) After fast-roping onto the roof of a building, rangers prepare to clear the structure during MOUT training.**



SSG Amanda Glenn

# Night Stalkers

1LT Holly Turner

**T**HE 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment uses specially modified aircraft and highly trained pilots and aircrews to get special operations teams to their missions. Often moving through hostile territory or flying in bad weather or at night, the 160th SOAR has adopted the name

“Night Stalkers.”

The 160th SOAR’s most significant resources are its unyielding mission focus and the ingenuity and perseverance of its soldiers. Those attributes served the unit well when “Little Bird” pilots flew protective flights over Mogadishu, Somalia, to

protect Task Force Ranger and when they braved enemy fire to retrieve a special forces reconnaissance team from behind enemy lines during Operation Desert Storm.

To become a 160th SOAR aviator, a pilot must serve one full tour after completion of flight school and undergo a unit-level pilot-in-command evaluation. Completion of 1,000 flight hours and 100 night-vision hours are desirable but not required. As part of their selection process, pilots attend a weeklong assessment at Fort Campbell, Ky., where they undergo physical, mental and emotional evaluations.

Physical testing includes the APFT and a Navy Class II swim test, which includes swimming in full uniform with flight vest and helmet. Candidates also must appear before a board of officers and subject matter experts who evaluate their performance and potential.

1LT Holly Turner is assigned to the 160th SOAR at Fort Campbell, Ky.



The smallest of the Army’s helicopters, the MH-6 Little Bird is used for a variety of missions, including the clandestine insertion of special operations forces.

# Support by SOSCOM

SSG Amanda C. Glenn

**W**OULD’N’T life be so much easier if planning the support portion of a deployment or exercise was as easy as ordering lunch at a fast-food restaurant? You simply check a menu and say, “Give me two communications teams, three transportation systems and, what the heck, throw in a water-purification team.”

Well, it is that simple if you’re working with U.S. Army Special Operations Support Command, said LTC Brian Burns, chief of SOSCOM logistics.

SOSCOM provides combat service support and combat health support to Army special operations forces in the full spectrum of conflict. It also provides operational and tactical communications for joint special operations task force commanders in

support of wartime missions.

The SOSCOM team — which includes 112th Special Operations Signal Battalion, the 528th Spec. Ops. Support Bn. and the Material Management Center — designs modular support packages to make its support more efficient and easier on customers, Burns said. Information on the number of soldiers involved in a deployment, its location and duration, and other criteria is used to decide what type and how much support is needed.

In an initial deployment package, or IDP, deploying units

can have a “company minus” to provide support. This includes a command-and-control element and teams to provide maintenance, repair parts, fuel, water, communications, medical, ammunition, food service and

**SPC Ramiro Rodriguez (left) and SPC Greg Auer, both of the 528th Spec. Ops. Sprt. Bn., work on a security fence during Exercise Cobra Gold.**

SSG Amanda Glenn





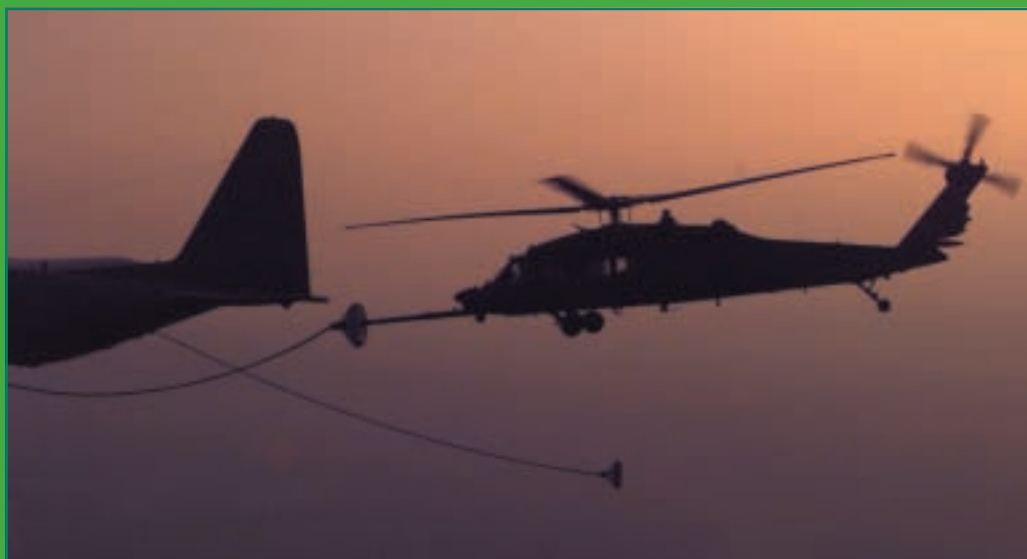
Once assigned to the regiment, soldiers attend “Green Platoon.” The Special Operations Aviation Training Company conducts this entry-level and refresher training. Green Platoon, which focuses on skill development and building self-confidence and teamwork, lasts five weeks for enlisted soldiers and up to eight months for rated aviators.

Since the 160th often flies at just 30 feet above water or treetop level, using night-vision goggles and infrared devices, Green Platoon prepares pilots in these skills.

According to their assignments, soldiers are also given the opportunity to attend airborne, advanced aviation MOS, water survival and survival, evasion, resistance and escape training.

State-of-the-art equipment is another critical requirement of successful SOAR operations, and the 160th possesses several very different and capable aircraft.

The AH/MH-6 Little Bird’s immediate ancestors are the OH-6A light observation helicopters used during the Vietnam War. The AH-6 is an attack version, used in close-air ground support and direct action. The



**The 160th SOAR’s MH-60 Black Hawks are fitted with an array of specialized equipment, including in-flight refueling probes.**

MH-6 is a utility aircraft, used to insert or extract small combat teams.

The MH-60 variants of the Black Hawk are utility aircraft typically equipped with aerial refueling capability, infrared suppressive exhausts and other special operations-specific technology.

The MH-47E Chinook is the 160th SOAR’s long-distance, heavy-lift

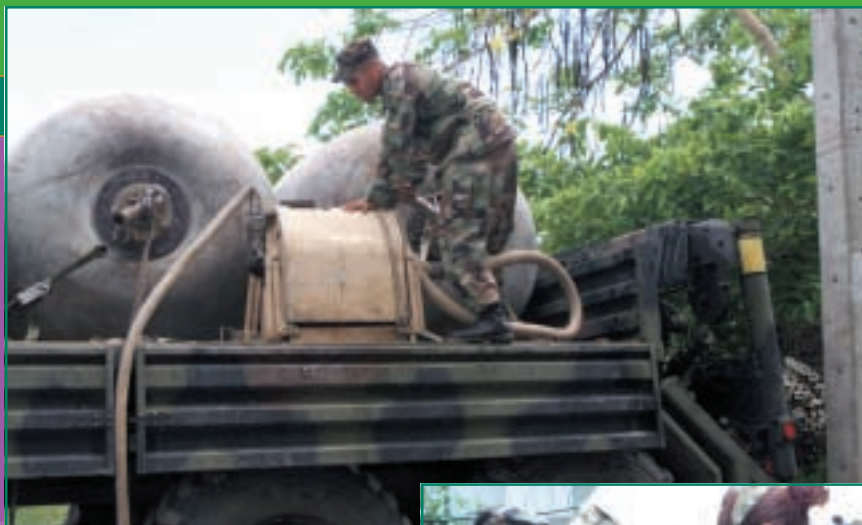
helicopter, which is equipped with aerial refueling capability, a fast-rope rappelling system and other upgrades or operations-specific equipment.

This combination of top-quality personnel and equipment guarantees the 160th SOAR’s reputation as a unit that delivers: on time, on target and with the right assets. □

transportation. The IDP can be ready to go in 18 hours.

Once the operation is under way, a follow-on-force package — which includes the remainder of the forward support company, the “storefront” initiative and additional elements from the headquarters and main support company — joins the support teams if needed. The storefront initiative provides avenues to repair equipment that cannot be repaired in theater.

SOSCOM also provides Special Operations Theater Support Elements, which are company-sized elements based in different theaters to support special operations in Korea, Japan, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and Germany. Another SOTSE will activate to support operations in Qatar later this year. □



SSG Amanda Glenn (both)

**SPC Joseph Washington of the 528th hooks up hoses to pump water for more than 250 soldiers during Exercise Cobra Gold.**

**Washington and SPC Neikesha Clark, also of the 528th, hook a hose up to a water bladder.**







A special forces candidate negotiates an obstacle on the mile-long "Nasty Nick" course at Camp MacKall, N.C., used to assess soldiers for SF training.

# The SF Pipeline

MAJ Richard Patterson

**T**HE legendary green beret. The special forces tab. Both are symbols of physical and mental excellence, courage, ingenuity and just plain stubbornness. And the only place to get them is at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, N.C.

At the heart of special forces training is the 1st Special Warfare Training Group, which conducts the Special Forces Assessment and Selection Course, Special Forces Qualification Course and all advanced special forces skills training such as language training and regional studies.

Aspiring special forces soldiers who make it through SFAS next attend the SFQC, or "Q" Course, which is divided into three phases. Depending on their specialties, soldiers will spend

from 18 months to two years in training.

Of the more than 2,000 candidates starting the assessment course annually, only about 850 are selected to attend the qualification course, and only some 600 will graduate the "Q" Course.

Phase I teaches small-unit tactics and land navigation. It's in Phase I that students learn the skills needed to conduct missions.

Training intensifies in Phase II, in which SF students focus on their individual "trades": medical, weapons, engineer or communications. Officers attending Phase II receive an overview of these specialties, but their training concentrates on mission planning.

Weapons sergeants must learn to use more than 50 U.S. and foreign weapons, from handguns to shoulder-fired missiles.

MAJ Richard Patterson is the JFKSWCS public affairs officer at Fort Bragg, N.C.

# Special Ops Reborn

Jennifer Whittle

**S**PECIAL operations forces spark the interest of military and civilians alike, and have often been portrayed, with varying degrees of accuracy, in big-budget motion pictures. *Delta Force*, the 1986 movie starring Chuck Norris, gave a glittering picture of SOF that often causes CSM Melvin L. Wick to chuckle. "I'm still trying to find one of those motorcycles with the rocket," he said recently.

Recently retired, Wick was the principal enlisted adviser to the commander in chief of U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. USSOCOM is the joint command of which U.S. Army Special Operations Command is one element.

The name Melvin Wick is, for

many, synonymous with special operations. For more than three decades, he contributed firsthand to special operations missions, trained and led special forces soldiers, and helped to shape the future of special forces at every level.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Desert One, the mission to rescue hostages from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran, that would lead to the foundation of modern SOF capabilities.

"The hostages were taken while we were still training," Wick said of the mission that left him with a sense of failure and frustration. "It was November 1979. What we did back then was primitive compared to what we do today."

Eight Americans were killed and five wounded in the ill-fated attempt

to rescue the hostages, but the mission's failures also pushed DOD to make needed corrections.

"Special ops started to get the money it needed, better equipment, aircraft and training. Capabilities were broadened," Wick explained.

USSOCOM commander in chief GEN Peter J. Schoomaker is another Desert One veteran. "It created this command," Schoomaker said. "It was a significant event."

"There is no comparison between SOF then and now," Wick said. "If that operation had to be done today, it would be relatively easy. The big difference we have is quality people."

All units have a formal selection process for members. Everyone is screened, tested and selected because of special skills.

It was in 1980 that the Joint Special

Jennifer Whittle works for the U.S. Special Operations Command PAO at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

Medics spend the longest time in training, during which they join future Air Force pararescue and combat control team members, Marine recon medics and Navy SEALs to learn vital lifesaving and intervention techniques that will earn them certification as emergency medical technicians.

Instructors bring students of different specialties together in Phase III to form notional Operational Detachment Alpha teams which must navigate unconventional warfare missions that bring together the general and specialized skills they have acquired up to this point.

The culmination of Phase III is Exercise Robin Sage, during which the 12- to 15-man ODAs complete a grueling unconventional warfare scenario that encompasses all that they have learned.

Following SFQC, all special forces soldiers attend a three-week survival, evasion, resistance and escape course and regionally orientated language training. Then it's off to one of the operational special forces groups.

The school continues to enhance the SF mission by providing advanced training in subjects such as close-quarters combat, military free-fall or underwater operations. □



SSG Amanda Glenn

**Special forces medics spend the longest time in training, during which they learn a range of lifesaving and intervention skills.**

## JOIN UP

SEE your Army career counselor or use these contacts for information about joining special operations units.

- Special forces recruiting: (910) 432-1818
- 19th and 20th Special Forces Groups (National Guard): (910) 432-2440
- Special Operations Aviation Regiment: (502) 798-9819
- Rangers: U.S. Army Recruiting Command, (800) USA-ARMY or [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com).
- Civil affairs and psychological operations: active component, (910) 432-7675/7274; reserve component, (910) 432-4210/2440
- U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School: (910) 432-5979
- Special Operations Support Command: (910) 432-0233.

**How to contact special operations units.**

Operations Command was formed and, according to Wick, its creation was a milestone. "We got our own budget, and it made a tremendous difference that the commander in chief acquired interoperability among all SOF units," Wick said.

Wick has directed SOF in Iran, Vietnam, Grenada, the battle of Mogadishu in Somalia, and in Panama.

Of Vietnam, he said: "I learned so much doing that. The responsibility, pressure, maneuvers. The casualty rate was so high and some teams never came back. They had true character, willing to sacrifice themselves. They did a dangerous job — and they did it well.

"The troops did unbelievable things in Grenada," Wick said. "They rose to the occasion. It validated the training and selection process. But I will never forget the first truckload of casualties, where the blood was running out like rain. Some were wounded, some were dead."

"Wick epitomizes special operations, the last of the original ones,"

Schoomaker said. "He is a great leader, with compassion. He learned special ops the hard way — not from school. I have always appreciated his courage."

While he has seen many changes and improvements in special opera-

tions since Desert One, Wick says there are still challenges ahead. "We try hard to recruit and retain special operators," Wick said. "And we need to think ahead and continue to seek change." □



**Though the disaster at Desert One ended the attempt to rescue hostages from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, it also led to the foundation of modern SOF capabilities.**